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The Voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

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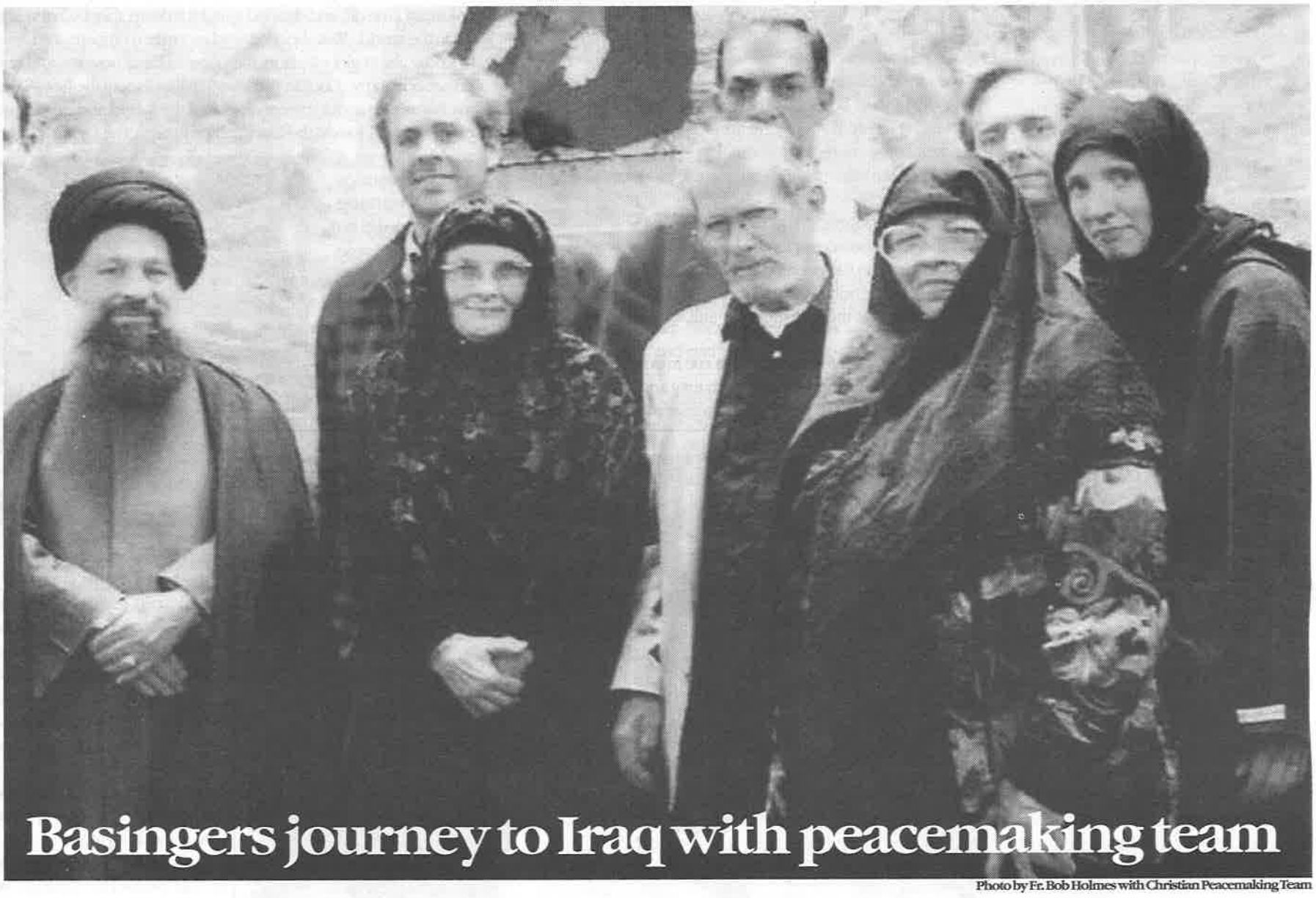

Basingers journey to Iraq with peacemaking team

Photo by Fr. Bob Holmes with Christian Peacemaking Team

Elton Davis
Des Moines Catholic Worker

Des Moines peace activists Bill and Jean Basinger traveled in Iraq from February 19th to March third of this year as members of a Christian Peacemaking Team (CPT). Travel into Iraq was unrestricted, being met by a lone Iraqi stamping the passports of persons entering the country from Jordan. Says Bill, "Isn't it something to take over a country and have control over none of the borders?" When asked about border controls, Jean replied, "They stamp your visas, and don't ask any questions."

Bill and Jean report that everything imaginable is coming into Iraq via civilian convoys from the borders, and without effective immigration or customs controls it would be easy to bring in weapons or individuals intent on combating the US military presence there.

When asked about how safe they felt while in Iraq, Bill and Jean said they felt quite safe and welcome among the Iraqis they encountered. It was when in close proximity to elements of the US military however, that they became wary. This is because US military units are the targets of individuals or groups opposed to the occupation of Iraq.

The Basingers state that their reason for traveling to Iraq is because the reports from Iraq coming from CPT delegations, Voices In The Wilderness, and other alternative sources are so different from what they were hearing in the mainstream media. As well, the Basingers were interested in attempting to assist in facilitating violence reduction.

While in Iraq, the CPT delegation was able to meet with Sunni and Shiite clerics, members of the inter-governmental council, and a number of people from villages where persons had been taken away and put in detainee camps.

The CPT delegation had a special focus on imprisoned Iraqi detainees. It was reported to the Basingers that individuals were rounded up in the middle of the night, and for no apparent reason. In one village, "coalition" forces took all the men, who had not been heard from since. The story is the same all over; US Military forces come in the middle of the night, round up all of the men.

Once in US custody prisoners are often humiliated. One form of humiliation is to place a prisoners in a position where the their heads touch the ground. This is a grave insult to the Islamic culture, for these people feel that their heads should never touch the ground.

When in outside prayer, the men may place a pebble between their heads and the ground to avoid this kind of conduct. In fact, the part of the body touching the ground is considered so unclean, that throwing a shoe at someone is the equivalent of a raised middle finger.

Bill and Jean were also in a position to visit Al Graiub prison while in Iraq. The Basingers visited the prison in an attempt to discover conditions there, but found a vast compound miles across, with various layers of security. They met young US military persons guarding Al Graiub, providing "perimeter" security for the prison. He told the Basingers he had never set foot inside the prison proper.

When family members of prisoners attempted to gain access to loved ones, the Basingers were told they are given the "bureaucratic shuffle" sent from one office to another. And this only if they were lucky enough to have an English speaking translator in tow. If family members could not obtain an English translator, their concerns were not heard.

When visiting inside the US controlled "Green Zone" the Basingers attempted to find an individual responsible for information about Iraqi detainees. Finally they were ushered into an office with a US Military officer, and behind him was a poster with a breakdown of the office's oversight responsibilities. When asked what their business was, Bill says he pointed to the portion of the organizational chart that said "detainees", and told the individual, "We're here about that." They were told by the individual behind the desk that he had not been educated to that part of his responsibilities since he had been there, and that there was very little hope that he ever would be.

The Basingers report that there is currently 70 per cent unemployment in Iraq. In downtown Baghdad, Bill says he was greeted with a surreal sight. Miles of government ministry buildings were shelled into rubble, with a single 20 story gleaming glass and steel tower standing unscathed. This building housed the Ministry of Oil for Iraq, and appeared to be operational at the time of their visit, with persons coming and going at will.

The Basingers said the overall message from the Iraqis to the USA is to "just get out." There is going to be a civil war whether the US remains in occupation or not. If Americans stay, they will get killed, if the US wants the Iraqi oil just take it, but get out.

In closing Bill suggested the following, "Give up our empire building mode, and take care of our own problems... with 1.4 million US troops overseas, we need to get them back within our own borders."

More information on the Christian Peacemaker Teams is available at www.cpt.org.

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Who We Are

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent life-style as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening our home for those in need of food, clothing, bedding, a shower, or a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that foster social justice.

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Cross-country peace trek brings new community members to the DMCW

Tom Schmitz
Des Moines Catholic Worker

On Christmas Day 2003, Tak and I, and three friends were walking south on US 69 from Ames to Des Moines. It was a day not very much different from the prior 60 days of our lives. In late October we began a coast-to-coast walk from New York City. Our destination was San Francisco. We had until February 29th to get there. It was a peace-walk. Inspired by the presidential candidacy of Dennis Kucinich. On Christmas Day we were just about halfway. And like most days, I had no idea where we'd be spending the night.

"We're staying at the Des Moines Catholic Worker House," Jon said. Jon Meier was the initiator of the peace-walk. A twenty-one year old graduate from Iowa State.

"What's that?" I grumbled.

"It's some kind of homeless shelter," Jon said.

"No way," I thought. "On Christmas Day? We walked 60 days halfway across the country for a homeless shelter on Christmas Day? Well, Merry damn Christmas." This was the glorious self-pity going through my mind.

Jon read my thoughts. "You might like it."

I was too worn out to respond.

And with that, on the evening of Christmas Day we stepped into the Des Moines Catholic Worker House. Met Carla and Jackie right away. Norman was there to greet us. Bill, of course. Elton. Eddie. Mike.

Tak and I have never felt so much at home in our lives. When we hit San Francisco, we telephoned the community and asked to join. And on Friday, March 12, 2004, we did. And we are in awesome love with our new family.

Tak was born in Cincinnati, grew up in Japan, attended the Tokyo Public School system through half of fifth grade, and then had to flip cultures when we moved back to the US three years ago. Tak spoke not a word of English. But he's a quick learner. This past year he's talked to people all across the country about peace, and has spoken at numerous schools, including three universities.

The easiest way to explain my background is that I am a recovering management consultant. Ran my own small business, both in the U.S. and in Japan, from 1985 serving the auto manufacturing industry. In early 2003, living in Lexington, Kentucky, I was granted some involuntary time off, and decided to use it to learn about what was going on in the world. Was shocked, and more than embarrassed, to come to know about globalization, the persistence of poverty, and our war driven economy. Couldn't believe that I had spent the first 48 years of my life asleep about the conditions of the world and our fellow human beings. I joined the Kucinich campaign, the Living Wage campaign, and on a moment's notice started walking across the US to spread a message of peace.

Someone said "your life can change in five minutes". And thank God for that. Mine did.

UNI Social Worker student Tom Kisling poses with Des Moines Catholic Worker guest Mike Solomon. Kisling delivered 822 pairs of socks to the DMCW, which were raised as part of a class project.

Sock it to 'em

UNI classroom sends 822 pairs of socks to the DMCW

"Imagine walking home on a cold and rainy March morning. On your way home you step in a puddle; your feet are cold and wet. Finally, you reach shelter... and maybe a pair of clean, dry socks. But what if you are homeless, and your temporary shelter is underneath a bridge, or a park shelter? Please donate thick new or gently used socks for the homeless in Iowa." From UNI Social Work sock drive flyer.

Carol Cook-Robert's University of Northern Iowa Social Worker class in Cedar Falls IA organized a sock drive for the DMCW as their class project this Spring. In her May 11th letter to the DMCW after the sock drive was completed Carol wrote, "In total, the class collected, in the course of the semester, 822 pairs of socks! In addition they learned about homelessness, economic disadvantage in the U.S., Dorothy Day, and the Catholic Worker movement.

Their visit to the DMCW House was memorable. They said, "Thank you for having us at 'your place' and for the opportunity to learn and be of service beyond the walls of the university."

Editor's note

The DM Reg Duffy graphic on the cover of this issue of V.P. is jarring. Its image is itched upon our collective national memory, forever connected with the image of the 9/11 twin towers in NYC coming down. Both revealing ugly truths about the times and nation we live.

The caption, "It's our hypocrisy...stupid!" is shocking! It's meant to be. We live in jarring and shocking times.

Catholic Workers put a lot of stock behind the Church's counsel to do the Works of Mercy. There are two types of Works of Mercy. There are seven well known corporal works of mercy; feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, cloth the naked, visit the imprisoned, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and bury the dead. There is also seven mostly unknown Spiritual Works of Mercy and one of them is To INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT (Dan. 12:13). This issue of the V.P. is mostly devoted to our efforts at "instructing the ignorant" regarding the true nature of this war and our role in it.

Instructing people who are deep in denial is a difficult task. Sometimes you have to be a little jarring and shocking to get through. FC-Editor

Mark your calendar

Every Friday evening you are invited to Mass and Scripture services. They are held at 7:30 p.m. at the Dingman House, 1310 7th St. Des Moines. All are welcome!

Community News

Hi! I hope this article finds everyone outside enjoying the Spring weather. We have been really busy this Winter and Spring. We've been blessed with the addition of a couple new community members and the return of a former community member.

Peace, Carla

(L to R) Joe Garvey, Carla Dawson and Fr. Bob McCahill. Joe Garvey, a long time friend of the DMCW and one of the St. Pius Boys brought his friend Fr. Bob McCahill to the DMCW for a visit. Fr. Bob McCahill is a Maryknoll Missioner and a native of Des Moines, IA. He has served amongst Muslims in Bangladesh, caring for poor and sick for nearly 30 years. Joe Garvey writes, "Bob lives in a simple mat-walled hut like his neighbors. He serves with 'disinterested love' seeking nothing in return, a real Mother Teresa style of life." Fr. McCahill's mailing address is P.O. Box 2399, Dhaka, 1000 Bangladesh. Anyone can receive a one year free subscription to Maryknoll Magazine to read more about Bob and many other Marykoll missionaries. Write to Maryknoll Magazine, Maryknoll, NY, 10545, or visit www.maryknoll.org.

We have had a lot of great work groups come and help us with the transition from Winter to Spring. They helped us clean everything from windows and walls to bathrooms and basements. We laid a whole new layer of wood chips around the houses.

We have been to anti-war demonstrations and peace banquets. We have lost loved ones and been blessed by new births. We have seen the world we thought we knew turned upside down from photos of awful, unspeakable things in Iraq that should shame every US citizen to tears. We have planted flowers and vegetables in our community garden and felt God in the soil. We have had our ups and downs and through it all, we are still trying to live out our Catholic Worker beliefs.

Norman is now with us full time. He had to quit his job at the rest stop area because he could not afford to keep his car going with the little pay he was receiving. The Dingman House basement and our supply room is the big benefactor of Norman's tidy touch. Good job Norman. He continues to drive the van for the Trinity United Methodist Prison Outreach Program - driving family members to prisons for visits throughout the state. He is also trying to get his blood pressure under control.

Mike T. is continuing to mend from a broken ankle. His return to us has been a great blessing. He is a great guy to be living at the Dingman House. He seems to be ever present at our most needed times. Great to have you back!

Tom and Tak Schmitz, our newest community members, fit into our Catholic Worker lives like they were always here. Tom and Tak first met us while they were in Iowa working for the Dennis Kucinich campaign during the Iowa primaries. They were part of a walk across the country for Kucinich. When they finished their walk in California they decided to return to Iowa and try out our community. They are a great addition. Tom is working with Lyle Ball at the Home Recycling and Tak, Tom's 14-year-old son, is hanging out with his new friends, being home schooled and taking Spanish lessons.

Elton has been busy working with his friend redoing cars. He often asks his mom, Wilma, to cover for him when he gets a chance to work and make a few bucks. Wilma is a great volunteer. We tell Wilma we would trade Elton for her any day. He has been really busy the last week because his daughter, Alysha, and his three grand children are visiting. Recovered fully from his 15 minutes of fame from being subpoenaed by the Federal grand jury, he is now working on plans to go to Central America and learn Spanish.

Jerry is still supplying us with the newspaper everyday. He is a help putting out the salt and pepper at dinner.

Jackie's been loving her life, enjoying her new digs at the Ligutti House and the great four-day-a-week job she has at the Drake student medical clinic. She is spending more time with her grand daughter. She also watches my boys on Mondays when I take classes. As I write this article, she is talking to a youth group about the Catholic Worker. She is really a blessing to me and everyone in our community.

With the changes in community, the Petsche boys moved from Dingman House to Ligutti House and are now living with my sister Jackie. Both have been busy, Jack finishing up track and Bill making every effort to attend Jack's track meets. They both went to Bill's big family gathering in Cedar Rapids on Mothers Day to visit Bill's mother, "Grandma Petsche". Bill is a big walker. We think he should get one of those step counters, we are sure he is walking 10 to 20 miles a day. Jack is finishing up 8th grade and has been accepted to Roosevelt HS.

Frank has been busy organizing his life and the Berrigan CW House. He has been doing a lot of speaking engagements, organizing demonstrations and going to a lot of trials. He's helping to organize two hour weekly vigils every Wednesday afternoon at the STARC Armory in Johnston, IA. They started doing a 30-minute memorial for all the Iowa military personal who have died in the war in Iraq during the vigils. During the 30 minutes of silence people hold poster-size photos of each of the fallen Iowans.

Enrique lives in Berrigan House with Frank. His English is getting better and better every day. He spends a lot of his time working with Hispanic youth groups at Visitation Church.

The newest member of the community is Manuel Galvez. Manuel is from Mexico. Richard Flamer sent him to us. A former seminarian and believer in Liberation theology, Manual came to Iowa to live at the DMCW. He survived his one month trial period with flying colors. He is a very courteous young man, always willing to chip in and give a hand. He lives in Lazarus House.

Eddie's been busy writing thank you notes at the speed of sound. He keeps the Dingman House floors looking like new. He is writing to a couple of death row inmates and visits an elderly shut in a few times a week. Eddie is our light in the darkness, the example and mark we all try to reach. He is truly our beloved.

My sons: Julius is working, Josh and Jordan are just finishing up school. If you need help this summer, give me a call and get some low cost help. They both are trying to save up money to go on vacation.

Irving keeps busy with the community laundry. Even though he is working with a broken down washer and dryer - he manages to do a great job!

Fran and Mike Fuller are rejoining our community. The farm life was not what they were looking for. They plan to move back after they sell their house outside of Corning, IA. They are looking for a house in our neighborhood and will be back soon. Fran is doing a couple of shifts a week at the house. Thanks, Fran!

I will end this article on a positive note. Jackie and I went to Central College's graduation this afternoon. A young lady, Celest Blaire, graduated. She grew up three houses from the Catholic Worker House. She has been an oasis to us. She as overcome many challengers in her life growing up poor on 7th St. To graduate in the top 3% from her HS is a miracle, to go to a good college and graduate is proof of the power of God.

May we continue to see all the blessings in our life and to remember we all are God's children. We will keep you in our prayers, and hope you do the same.

Norman's Whereabouts

By Norman Searah, DMCW Community Member

I have got to a confession to make. I am no longer interested in owning a car (at least for now), especially owning a car that becomes a problem. One problem is the stress of worrying about the car causing my blood pressure to rise. I was always worrying about paying for added repairs while I had to keeping paying my monthly car payment. It was too much. I was not making enough money at my job to keep the car too. So I quite my job at the rest area, stopped paying my monthly payments for the car and parked the car in back of the Dingman House waiting for the rep man to come get it. My blood pressure still goes up every time I see my car parked in back of Dingman House. I sure hope the rep man picks up my car soon.

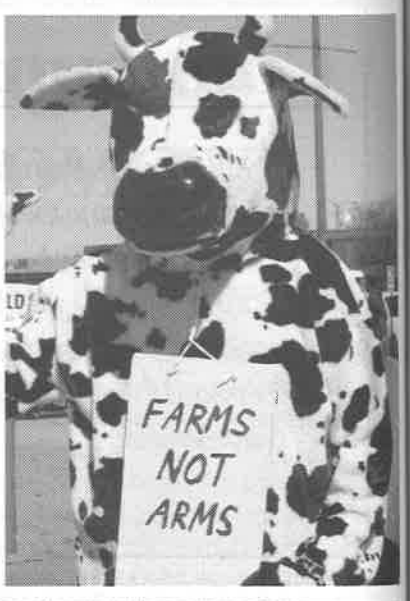
Right now I am working on seeing a doctor soon to treat my high blood pressure. And I want to find a job that will allow me to have Fridays and Saturdays off so I can do the two things that I love doing. On Fridays I get to pick up the vegetables and fruit with the CW Van for the Saturday Free Food Store and on two Saturdays every month, I get to drive people to go visit loved ones in state prisons. Maybe my next job will pay me enough money for another car.

I have been taking part in the weekly Wed. vigils outside the main gate of the Iowa National Guard Headquarters. It is a peaceful gathering on both sides of the road. We have a lot of people going in and out the Armory. The weather's been good even though we often have trouble when it gets too windy to hold the banners up. I have two habits during and after the vigil. One is I try to pick up any litter that is on the ground. The other is I wave at the guards at the gate. Its my way of saying thank you. When I am at the vigil I do a lot of praying for the men and women, military and civilian workers along with the Iraqi people that are caught up in this war.

I keep thinking of how in American we talk about peace and justice and how great of a country we have. We say democracy is great and if we are trying to spread democracy why did we allow Iraqi prisoners be abused by our own people. It ain't right. Its time that America starts to become more accountable for the wrongs we do. The sooner we give back Iraq to the Iraqi people and get out of their country, the better. It is a feeling and a belief that I have and the most that I can do right now is to pray. I thank you for your time.

Parading for peace

March 20



Over 1500 people participated in "The World Still Says No To War" Peace Parade in Des Moines, Saturday, March 20. The Parade and Rally at Drake University was part of the Global Day of Protest on the First Anniversary of the USA invasion of Iraq. DMCWers participated in both the Parade and Rally. A good time was had by all. It was exciting and energizing to be out on the streets with so many like minded peace people.

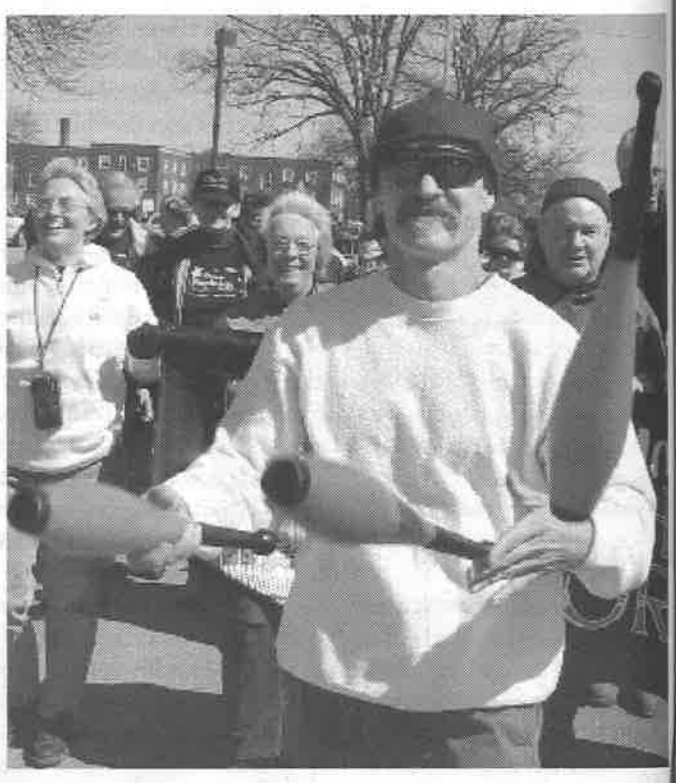
At top right, Jeff Weis dances in the parade in his cow outfit, touting the message "Farms, not arms!"

At middle right, DMCWer Bill Petsche provides some entertainment through juggling.

At bottom right, Helen Tichy, age 93, and Helen Ostor, age 87, are among the radical holy women of Des Moines who have led the way in peace and justice making for over 25 years. Both are members of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Catholic reform group Call To Action. They have visited third-world countries and been arrested many times doing non-violent civil disobedience. They are also two of our best friends and supporters of the DMCW. Through the years, they have volunteered more time to helping with the hospitality than most community members do during their entire time in the community.

Below, DMCWer Elton Davis sings the Ashcroft blues. At the peace rally after the parade, Elton joined with many speakers and performers including Tom Hayden, international peace activist, founder of the Students for Democratic Society in 1962, an one of the famed 1968 "Chicago 8".

At bottom, a group gathers to march with the DMCW banner in the parade. From left to right are Wendy Vasquez & her grandchild, John LaForge, Wilma and Elton Davis, Tom and Tak Schmitz, Jack and Bill Petsche, Carla Dawson, Brian Terrell, Rev. Carmen Lampe-Zeitler, and Elaine Green.



Above: Jean Larson and Jean Basinger roll under the fence at the main gate of STARC Armory. Below (L-R): Renee Espeland, Jean Basinger, Frank Cordaro, Chet Guinn, Jane Larson and Rita Hohenshall crossing NW 78th Ave. on to the main gate and property of the STARC Armory. Photos taken by Press Citizen on March 21.

Direct Action March 21

One hundred and twenty five people showed up across the street of the main gate of the STARC Armory in Johnston Iowa to protest the war and occupation in Iraq Sunday March 21st. They were there to support eleven people who took their protest of the war unto the property of the STARC Armory, The STARC Armory is the Headquarters for the Iowa National Guard dubbed the Iowa Pentagon building. It is the command post from which Iowa Guard personal are federalized and released to fight in Iraq.

This was the 3rd such direct action protest at the STARC Armory since the war began and the first time protesters were able to actually get onto the Armory's property. On November 16th last, demonstrators faced a line of 17 riot-geared policemen protecting the entire NW 78th Ave with another 20 police officers backing them up. In Nov. those risking arrests were arrested as soon as they crossed onto NW 78th and the public right away. This time there was not a police officer in sight.

Those risking arrest quickly huddled and decided to cross over NW 78th and occupy the driveway going into the Armory at its main gate. Once across the street in the driveway and sitting in front of the main gate, the group read their statement. After the statement was read and a few songs sung, one-by-one 11 of us rolled under the gate onto Armory property.

As soon as we began entering the Armory under the main gate, Des Moines police officers appeared and proceeded to arrest everyone who came under the fence. The 11 protesters – Frank Cordaro, Bill Basinger, Jean Basinger, Sr.Mary Lou Specha, Renee Espeland, Ed Bloomer, Rita Hohenshall, Bonnie Urfer, Chris Gaunt, Pam Spencer and Jean Larson – were all handcuffed and placed in Police vans.

We were taken to the Audubon Club lodge, about 1/2 mile from the site. All but Chris Gaunt were ticketed with a misdemeanor trespass charge, released and given a March 29th court date. Chris chose not to give any information and spent the night in jail and released.

Nine of the eleven ticketed protesters showed up for court. We all pleaded no contest. Bill and Jean Basinger, Sr Mary Lou Specha, Renee Espeland, Rita Hohenshall, Pam Spencer and Jean Larson were given 15 hrs. of community service plus court cost. Ed Bloomer and Frank Cordaro were given a day in jail.

Chris Gaunt's sentencing for her March 21 protest was done at the sentencing for her Nov 16th protesting efforts. And Bonnie Urfer's case is pending.

Statement of those risking arrest at the STARC Armory on March 21, 2004

Dear Citizen Soldiers and your Commanders,

We are here today marking the one year anniversary of the War and Occupation in Iraq. This is our third such protest here at the STARC Armory. We feel that your comrades who are out of the state, participating in the occupations of Iraq are in violation of all civil laws against humanity and should be called back. Our hope is peace, our prayers are to end the occupation now!

If the war with Iraq was immoral, unjust and illegal, the occupation of Iraq is equally immoral, unjust and illegal. It has led to the loss of our precious young people and to the loss of countless more young and old people in Iraq. Its misuse of our country's human and financial resources is exhausting the wealth of our nation, forcing closures and cutbacks of services while the military budget goes wildly unchecked.

Here at the STARC Armory, the headquarters of the Iowa Guard, dubbed the Iowa Pentagon building, our own complicity as citizens in this occupation comes home. The Iowa National Guard was created to protect and serve the citizens of our state. We can not stand silent as it is diverted to a war and occupation which are against international, human and divine law.

We call on all members of the Guard to examine your consciences and to inform yourselves of the realities of this occupation. There are resources available to you if you choose to refuse to serve in this war and occupation. To find out your right to conscientiously object to this war and occupation contact the GI Hotline, 1-800-394-9544. In Des Moines you can contact the American Friends Service Committee, the Catholic Peace Ministry, and the Des Moines Catholic Worker community. At this critical time we offer you our help and solidarity in this regard.

We knowingly and willingly make this plea to you in violation of 18 USC Sec. 1381 and 2387. We knowingly and willingly embrace some of your risk by urging you to refuse duty in the U.S. military. We plead with you, as Bishop Oscar Romero pleaded with the Salvadorian troops: "When you hear the words of a man telling you to kill, remember instead the words of God: 'Thou shall not kill!' No soldier is obliged to obey an order contrary to the law of God. In the name of God, in the name of our tormented people who have suffered so much and whose laments cry out to heaven, I beseech you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God, stop the repression!"

Today 11 of us are taking the added action of crossing the line here at the STARC Armory - dubbed the Iowa Pentagon building. We risk arrest and imprisonment while practicing the American tradition of nonviolent civil disobedience, in some measure matching the human equity and personal sacrifice that war makers make, in our efforts to be peace makers.

Today our hopes and prayers are with you, your families, our nation and the people of Iraq and Afghanistan.

2nd annual Midwest Catholic Worker Retreat recap

Frank Cordaro
Des Moines Catholic Worker

Midwest Catholic Workers gather for a picture during the second-anuual resistance retreat in Omaha, NE, on March 14, 2004.

This year's Midwest CW Resistance Retreat in Omaha NE was nothing short of a great success! Thirty five people attended the weekend retreat and forty went to Offutt AFB on Sunday for the witness and line crossing.

There were representatives from nine Catholic Worker communities: DMCW; Strangers and Guests CW from Maloy, IA; Olive Branch CW from Duluth, MN; Saint Jude CW from Campaign, IL; Winona CW from Winona, MN; Little Flower CW from Louisa, VA; Emmaus CW House from Yankton, SD; Saginaw CW from Saginaw, MI; and the Saint Louis CW from St. Louis, MO.

There were also local Omaha folks from the Spirit of Peace Community, NE Call To Action, NE For Peace and the ReAct House in attendance.

The retreat was hosted at Holy Family Parish in Omaha, NE. Holy Family is a very old and small inner-city parish in Omaha with around 40 families. They have a long history of peace and justice work. They do a lot of direct service ministries to the poor and homeless. Holy Family was an ideal setting for our retreat. At the 10 a.m. Sunday Mass the congregation gave all of us Catholic Workers a special blessing as we prepared to go to Offutt Air Force Base.

Bill and Susan Frankle-Streit from Little Flower CW were excellent retreat masters. Combining bible study, prayer and story telling with their years of Catholic Worker resistance experience, Bill and Sue lead us in a full weekend of community building and faith sharing. They helped us see the hard work required to do Gospel based peacemaking.

They reminded us of our rich Catholic Worker tradition of Gospel based non-violent resistance. And having five children on hand helped keep the weekend real.

The retreat ended with a witness at the front gate of Offutt Air Force Base in Bellvue NE. Offut is the home of the Strategic Nuclear and Space Commands.

Eight retreatants crossed the line, were detained by base security, released and given ban and bar letters.

Eight CWers charged with trespass in Omaha court

Frank Cordaro
Des Moines Catholic Worker

Breaking a long standing practice of simply giving people 'ban and bar' letters for line crossings at Offutt AFB, the Offutt JAG Office through the Omaha Fed Attorney's Office decided to charge all eight CWers who crossed the line at Offutt AFB last March 14 with Fed trespassing. It is a misdemeanor charge that carries a maximum penalty of six months in jail and a $5,000 fine.

When asked the reason line crossers were being prosecute this time, Russ Sibble, the Fed. prosecuting attorney, on loan from Offutt, said it was because, "the nation is at war." The price for peace making just went up at Offut AFB.

Four of the now dubbed "Omaha 8" appeared in Omaha Fed Court Wed. May 26 and Thurs. May 27th. All four appeared before Federal Magistrate Judge Gossett. Judge Gossett is new to the bench and these were his first Offutt protest cases. Chris Dunn and Jerry Ebner appeared before Judge Gossett Wed.

Chris Dunn of the Rock Island Catholic Worker was first. Chris was represented in court by Chuck Hannan. In exchange for his no-contest plea, the Prosecutor agreed to an oral plea bargain and recommended a $100 fine and one year unsupervised probation with the added stipulation that Chris not enter onto any military base during the one year probation. Chris accepted the plea bargain. He pled guilty. The judge accepted the Prosecutors recommendation and gave Chris a $100 fine and one year unsupervised probation.

Jerry Ebner of Des Moines was the next defendant before Judge Gossett. Jerry was also represented by Chuck Hannan. In exchange for his no-contest plea, the Persecutor agreed to an oral plea bargain and recommended a $100 fine and a two year unsupervised probation with the added stipulation that Jerry not enter onto any military base during the two year probation. Jerry accepted the plea bargain. He pled guilty. The judge accepted the Prosecutors recommendation and gave Jerry a $100 fine and two years unsupervised probation.

The following day Bill Frankel-Streit and Greg Boertje-Obed appeared before Judge Gossett. Both represented themselves.

Bill Frankel-Streit of the Little Flower Catholic Worker in Louisa, VA plead guilty. Judge Gossett accepted Bill's no contest plea. After a very moving statement in which Bill stated that he would be hard press to be able to pay any fine, the Prosecutor recommended only a year of unsupervised probation with no fine. The Judge accepted the Prosecutors recommendation and Bill received a sentence of one year unsupervised probation.

Greg Boertje-Obed of the Duluth Catholic Worker represented himself. He pled not guilty. He asked that Chuck Hannan be assigned to his case. The Judge accepted his not guilty plea, assigned Chuck Hannan as his court assigned attorney and set a June 25th trial date.

The Omaha 8 - CWer Line Crossers at Offutt AFB March 14, 2004 are (L to R) Bill Basinger, (top) Chris Du (below) Galen Leonhardy, Bill Frankel-Streit, Rosalie Riegle, Jerry Ebner, Greg Boertje-Obed and Paul Gallagh

The following week on Wed June 2nd the remaining four of the "Omaha 8" appeared before Federal Magistrate Judge Thalken in the Omaha Fed Court House. All four were represented by Chuck Hannan. Judge Thalken accepted the prosecutors recommended sentence in each no contest plea.

Bill Basinger of Des Moines pled guilty and received two years of unsupervised probation with the stipulation he not enter any military base plus a $200 fine.

Galen Leonhardy of Rock Island pled guilty and received a year of unsupervised probation with the stipulation he not enter any military base plus a $100 fine.

Rosalie Riegle of the Saginaw CW pled guilty and received a year of unsupervised probation with the stipulation she not enter any military base plus a $100 fine.

Paul Gallagher of the St Jude CW in Champaign, IL pled not guilty. He was given a June 25th trial date.

Big thank-you's go out to Chuck Hannan for representing folks who asked for it. Chuck is an attorney from Council Bluffs. He is also a Catholic Deacon from St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs. Chuck has represented other Offutt protesters in the past. He considers it part of his ministry. And even though he could receive financial compen tion from the Fed. governme for these cases, he refuses money for his efforts.

Thanks also to the Om Spirit of Peace Community offering hospitality to the de dants and supporters during court hearings.

Paul Gallagher and G Boertje-Obed will be tried gether on June 25th before Ju Gossett. Chuck Hannan wi their attorney. For more info show of support contact Spirit of Peace Community Webster St., Omaha NE, 68 or at (402) 991-4586 spiritofpeacecommunity@yahoo

Each Wed. the DMCWers and Catholic Peace Ministry host a two-hour peace vigil across the street from STARC Armory in Johnston, IA, between 3:30-5:30 p.m. Thirty minutes are devoted to a silent memorial to the 14 fallen Iowa soldiers who have died in Iraq. Come join us! With questions, contact the Berrigan House at 515-282-4781.

In Remembrance...

Wednesday, May 19th Poster Line at STARC Armory: (L to R) Chet Guinn, Renee Espeland, Lea Ann Bradford, Rita Hohenshell, Fran Fuller, Norman Searah, Jean Basinger, Dixie Webb and Ed Bloomer.

Annual Anti-Nuke Vigil to commemorate U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Nagasaki

The DMCW and the Spirit of Peace Community in Omaha invite you to join us for our annual 3-day vigil at the gates of Offutt Air Force Base, home of the Strategic Nuclear (StratCom) and US Military Space Commands at Offutt AFB in Bellevue, NE.

Come stand, pray and do penance with us as we commemorate the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, on August 6 and August 9, 1945.

Contemplate with us the work and mission of these god-awful Commands, the challenges they pose to all life on our planet and the demonic claim it makes on the soul and spirit of our nation.

This year's vigil begins Friday, August 6th at 8 AM, the hour the US dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, at the Kinney gate and main entrance to Offutt AFB. The vigil ends Monday, August 9th, at 11 AM, the hour the US dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

The vigil will begin at 8 a.m. each day and last until 8 p.m. through the weekend. Monday Aug 9th, the last day will conclude with a prayer circle and line crossing at 11 a.m. Hospitality will be provided. Please contact us if you need a place to stay.

Everyone is welcome to come join us in this annual witness and vigil. Come for an hour or for the whole three days. For more information contact The Spirit of Peace Community by phone at (402) 991-4586 or e-mail at spiritofpeacecommunity@yahoo.com. You can also contact the DMCW at the Berrigan House, 515-282-4781 or cordaro@mchsi.com.

Check this out!

March 21, 2004, *The Daily Nonpareil,* Council Bluffs IA. , "100 years of peace: Human equity and personal sacrifice, Catholic Workers and the peace movement go back nearly a century" by GREG JERRETT, Staff Writer.

This article can be viewed at the website running up the side of this box!

http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=11153443&BRD=2554&PAG=461&dept_id=507134&rfi=6

The dominant religion in the world today...

The dominant religion in the world today is not Judaism, Christianity or Islam. The dominate religion in the world today is the religion of redemptive violence. It believes that violence saves, that war brings peace and that might makes right. It is one of the oldest religions in the world. It invokes God's sovereignty as its own. It misappropriates the language, symbols, and scriptures of all religions. Its God is the tribal god worshiped as an idol. Its metaphor is not the journey but the fortress. Its offer is not forgiveness but victory. Its good news is not the unconditional love of enemies but their final elimination. Its salvation is not a new heart but a successful foreign policy. It usurps the revelation of God's purposes for humanity found in Abraham, Jesus and Mohammed. It is blasphemous. It is idolatrous. And it is immensely popular.

-Adopted from the Jonah House Community's Holy Week 2004 "Faith and Resistance" Retreat e-mail report. This year's retreat theme was 'Subverting the Myth of Redemptive Violence.' For more information, contact the Jonah House at 301 Moreland Ave, Baltimore, MD 21216, (410) 233-6238 or disarmnow@erols.com. Visit them online at www.jonahhouse.org.

March trials held for November 16th protesters

Frank Cordaro
Des Moines Catholic Worker

Chris Gaunt was found guilty of assault and interfering with police work March 16, 2004.

Chris Gaunt, a 47 yr old Librarian at Grinnell College and one of the Nov 16th protesters at STARC Armory was also charged with misdemeanor assault and interfering with police work. Chris chose to go limp after her arrest. While hand cuffed behind her back, Chris was carried to the police van face-down in a painful manner. The mere act of going limp was enough to bring the added charge of interfering with police work.

While trying to back out of the van in an effort to relieve the pain she was in, from her stomach to her knees and still handcuffed, Chris accidentally made contact with a policeman's knee. The police claimed she kicked the officer on purpose and hurt him. This claim brought on the misdemeanor assault charge.

Offered a plea bargain before the trial, Chris decided to prove her innocence and go to trial. This would prove to be a mistake. After a two day trial Chris was found guilty on all three accounts. At her sentencing on March 30th, Judge Smith gave Chris a 60 day suspended sentence for assault, with 3 days credit given for time served. The Judge put her on informal probation for 12 months. Cost = $250. He ordered her to do 60 hours of community service (cost = $30), and gave her 4 months to do it.

> **"The next time we face charges like these, we can not afford to be so ill prepared to defend ourselves, nor naive about court proceedings."**

Chris must also make restitution to the victim, Officer Scott Fields, for any medical expenses related to the alleged injury. The Judge ordered Chris to participate in the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program, if Officer Fields so desires. And Chris was ordered to take, at her expense, an 'assaultive behavior' class, an all day Saturday class at DMACC. Then she was fine $50 for each of the other 3 charges: trespass on 11/16/03 and 3/21/04, and interference with arrest on 11/16/03. Plus ordered to pay court costs totaled $160 for the November charges and $142 for the March arrest. (Chris was one of the 11 people arrested March 20th at STARC Armory, she plead guilty after spending a night in jail. She was sentenced for her March 21st trespass conviction at the same time.)

Lots of lessons learned in this unfortunate conviction. I attended most of the two day trial. Chris's defense was poorly presented. There were many inconsistencies on both sides. In the end the jury believed the police officer and not Chris. Chris's assault conviction is something the peace community in Des Moines will have to live with, it is a blemish upon our nonviolent claims. The next time we face charges like these, we can not afford to be so ill prepared to defend ourselves, nor naive about court proceedings.

Five Nov 16 STARC Armory Protesters were found guilty of trespass March 25, 2004.

Five of the remaining eight Nov. 16th STARC Armory protesters went to trial in Des Moines March 22nd in the Polk Co. Court House. After a three and a half day trial Ed Bloomer, Rita Hohenshell, Josh Plank, Charlotte Hutchison and Frank Cordaro were found guilty of trespassing. All but Cordaro were represented by Sally Frank. Cordaro represented himself. All five defendants maintained that they were arrested on a public right away on NW 78th St, the street directly north of the Armory's main gate. Iowa law states that a person can not be charged with trespassing on a public right away. Despite the fact that the prosecutor never did prove the protesters were not on a public right away a six person jury, after a full day of deliberations found the defendants guilty.

At the sentencing that took place on Friday April 2nd, Judge Blink sentenced each defendant to time served. Attorney Sally Frank is appealing this trespass conviction, appeal pending.

The two remaining Nov. 16, 2003 STARC Armory Protesters, Carla Dawson and Jane Majers, had their charges dropped. Carla and Jane did not intend to risk arrest last Nov. 16th when they were unjustly arrested for stepping over the red line that the National Guard painted in the grass across the street from the Armory's main gate.

Via Pacis
Des Moines Catholic Worker
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Worker Wishlist

Requesting your help...

Prayers
Without them, nothing else matters.

Volunteers
Individuals and work crews needed for hospitality (serving food, cleaning-up), general house cleaning and/or maintenance. Inside and outside. Call us or just stop by.

Renovation
We need carpenters, plumbers and electricians to help with:

Dingman House:
- All New Kitchen
- Fire Escape

Lazarus House:
- New Roof
- Fire Escape

Ligutti House:
- New Windows
- Foundation Work
- Fire Escape

We need your donations or skills!

Donations
Cash donations are important to pay taxes, utilities, supplies, and regular maintenance.

Supplies
Please Note – Our pantry and supplies usually run pretty empty in the summer time. We're in need of your special attention right now for:

■Canned Goods & Dry Goods, Dairy, etc.:
Cereal, Coffee, Canned Fruit, Vegetables Beans, Soups and Stews, Sugar, Coffee Creamer, Juices, Milk, Cheese, Butter, Eggs

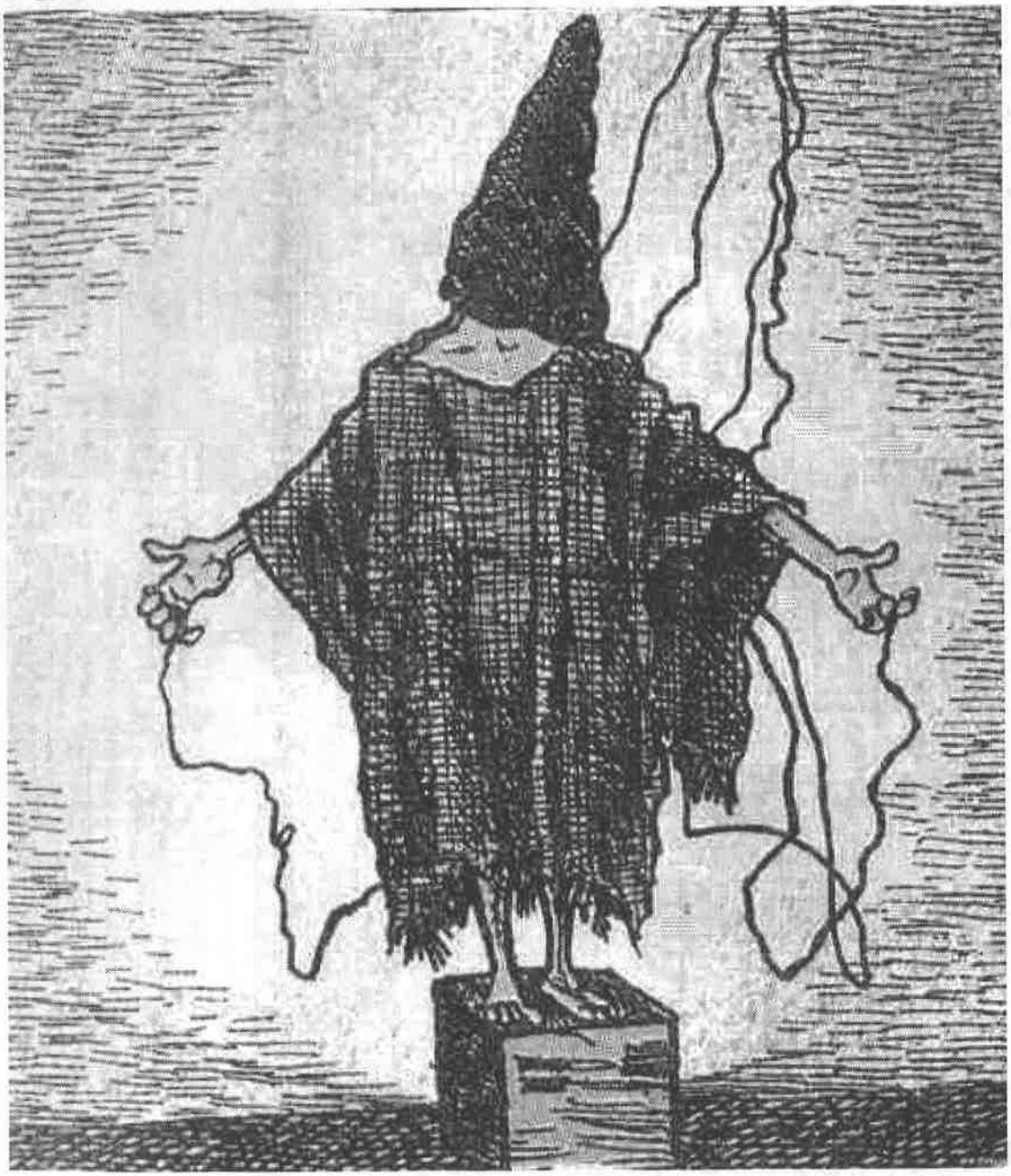
■Toiletries
Feminine Hygiene Products (maxi pads and tampons), Disposable Razors, Shaving Cream, Shampoo & Conditioner, Body Lotion, Facial Lotion, Deodorant, Toothpaste, Toothbrushes, Toilet Paper

Clothing
Socks
T-Shirts
Shorts
Shoes
Jeans

Over the Counter Medicines
Tylenol
Ibuprofen
Multiple Vitamins
Ointments

via pacis

The Voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community



Cartoon by Duffy of *The Des Moines Register*

It's our hypocrisy, stupid!